United Nations A/62/513–S/2007/638

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
30 October 2007
English
Original: French

General Assembly
Sixty-second session
Agenda item 99 (e)
Review and implementation of the Concluding Document of the Twelfth Special Session of the General Assembly: regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa

Security Council
Sixty-second year

Letter dated 11 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith, on behalf of the current Chairman of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the report of the Committee's twenty-sixth ministerial meeting, held from 3 to 7 September 2007 in Yaoundé, Republic of Cameroon (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 99 (e), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Martin **Belinga-Eboutou**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 11 October 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Report of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa on its twenty-sixth ministerial meeting

Yaoundé, 7 September 2007

Introduction

1. The twenty-sixth ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was held in Yaoundé, Republic of Cameroon, from 3 to 7 September 2007.

2. The following member States participated in the meeting: the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Burundi, the Republic of Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gabonese Republic, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the Republic of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe and the Republic of Chad.

3. The secretariat of the Committee was comprised of members of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. The following entities participated as observers: United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the African Union, the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa (RECSA), the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) and the Permanent Secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

4. The opening ceremony featured:

- A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, read out by General Lamine Cissé, Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Central African Republic;
- A message from the Secretary-General of ECCAS, read out by Mr. Nelson Cosme, Under-Secretary-General for Human Integration, Peace, Security and Stability.

5. The opening statement was delivered by Mr. Jean Marie Atangana Mebara, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon. The closing statement was made by His Excellency Mr. Dion Ngute, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon, in charge of Commonwealth affairs.

Summary of proceedings

I. Adoption of the agenda

6. The Committee adopted the following agenda:

1. Adoption of the agenda of the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting.
2. Election of the Bureau.
3. Report of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman.
4. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee:
   (i) Burundi;
   (ii) Republic of Cameroon;
   (iii) Central African Republic;
   (iv) Democratic Republic of the Congo;
   (v) Republic of Chad.
5. Inter-State security cooperation among the Central African countries: Report on preparations for the Bahr-El-Gazal joint military exercise (November 2007).
6. Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa:
   (i) Implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative;
   (ii) Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa.
7. Report by the ECCAS secretariat on the institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms.
8. Consideration of the draft General Assembly resolution on the activities of the Advisory Committee.
9. Report on the activities of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa.
10. Conference on cross-border security issues in Central Africa (separate agenda).
11. Date and place of the next meeting.
12. Other matters.
13. Adoption of the report of the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting.

II. Election of the Bureau

7. The Committee elected a Bureau comprised of the following countries:

- Chairman: Cameroon
- First Vice-Chairman: Angola

- Second Vice-Chairman: Gabon
- Rapporteur: Chad.

III. Report of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman

8. The Committee noted with interest the report on the activities of the outgoing Bureau, submitted by its Chairman. It commended the dynamism with which the Bureau had performed its duties and, in particular, its active contribution, in cooperation with the secretariat, to the preparation and organization of the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting.

IV. Review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee

9. The review of the geopolitical and security situation in some States members of the Committee revealed sharp contrasts in developments in Central Africa, particularly in the countries covered in the geopolitical review, since the Committee's last meeting. While admirable progress has been achieved in some countries that were once the scene of armed conflict, persistent tensions, the deteriorating security situation and, very often, the resurgence of armed confrontations are stark reminders that peace is fragile in the countries covered.

10. The humanitarian and human rights situation also continues to be a serious source of concern in several parts of Central Africa.

11. This situation makes it imperative for the parties concerned, the other countries of the subregion and the international community to take the necessary steps to bring about national reconciliation, consolidate peace and usher in a new era that will enable peoples who have suffered for too long from the scourge of war to flourish.

12. In accordance with the provisional agenda, the delegations of Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo reported on the geopolitical and security situation in their respective countries.

13. The Committee also took note of the statement by the delegation of Cameroon describing the geopolitical and security situation in that country.

14. The ECCAS secretariat and the Office for Disarmament Affairs informed the Committee of their decision to extend the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 18 August 2007 to include the presentation of the review of the geopolitical situation in Central Africa at subsequent meetings of the Committee.

(i) Burundi

15. The Committee expressed its concern at the deterioration in the political climate in Burundi, characterized chiefly by:

- The deadlock in the National Assembly;
- Disputes concerning the legitimacy of the Government created as a result of the latest ministerial shuffling.

16. It likewise expressed its concern at the deterioration in the military and security situation in Burundi as reflected in:

- The increase in criminal acts perpetrated against the population by FNL combatants and clashes between the latter and the defence and security forces;
- The proliferation of firearms among the population;
- Persistent crime in parts of the country in the form of road ambushes and attacks by armed bandits and members of the Forces nationales de libération (Palipehutu-FNL) in search of food and money. Certain isolated cases appear to be the acts of members of the defence and security forces, who have recently been caught.

17. The Committee welcomed the measures taken by the Government of Burundi to prosecute the perpetrators of those brutal acts and urged it to bring to justice without exception any person found guilty of such acts.

18. The Committee expressed its deep concern regarding the problems encountered in the implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement between the Government and Palipehutu-FLN and especially the withdrawal of members of Palipehutu-FNL from the committees for the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement, which had led to a resurgence of tension and seriously undermined ongoing efforts to consolidate peace.

19. The Committee condemned the recent killings in Bujumbura of some 20 members of FNL who had advocated peace.

20. It urged the Government and Palipehutu-FNL and all other political actors to give priority to dialogue, to continue cooperating closely in a spirit of openness with a view to finding solutions to all outstanding problems and to take in good faith all steps necessary for the full implementation of the Agreement. In that connection, it welcomed the meeting held in Dar es Salaam on 17 June 2007 between President Nkurunziza and the head of Palipehutu-FNL, Agathon Rwasa.

21. The Committee encouraged the Government to redouble its efforts to strengthen the democratic process in Burundi, in particular by pursuing dialogue with the political parties, cooperating with civil society, ensuring respect for the rule of law and human rights, including freedom of expression and the press, and promoting national reconciliation.

22. The Committee also encouraged the countries of the Regional Initiative for Peace in Burundi and the facilitation team to take all necessary steps to ensure that Palipehutu-FNL chose the way of peace once and for all.

23. It made an urgent appeal to the international community and to donors to provide Burundi with all the support it needed to tackle the serious socio-economic problems facing it.

(ii) Cameroon

24. The Committee welcomed the climate of peace and stability that prevailed in Cameroon. It took note with interest of the information provided by the Cameroonian delegation regarding the recent successful municipal and legislative elections and welcomed also the progress made in modernizing public life and strengthening peaceful democracy.

25. The Committee commended the efforts of the Cameroonian Government to complete the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative and welcomed prospects for improvement in the country's economic and social situation resulting from the Initiative.

26. The Committee expressed its concern at the growing cross-border insecurity in Cameroon and commended the security forces for their success in the efforts to deal with road-blockers.

27. It likewise expressed concern about the repercussions for Cameroon of the crisis in the Central African Republic, which had generated a flow of 27,000 Central African refugees in southern Cameroon.

(iii) Central African Republic

28. The Committee welcomed the expressed willingness of the Government and other Central African parties to engage in a dialogue open to all with a view to finding solutions to the situation obtaining in the country.

29. It welcomed the efforts by the "group of wise men" in the context of the dialogue process and welcomed in particular the consultations that the group had held with the country's political parties, trade unions, civil society associations, the diplomatic corps and rebel groups.

30. It urged the Central African parties to take the recommendations emanating from those consultations into account and to take the necessary steps in good faith to ensure that the dialogue took place promptly. In that connection, it welcomed the announcement by President Bozizé of the establishment of a preparatory committee to organize the dialogue.

31. At the same time, the Committee expressed serious concern at the continuing precariousness of the security situation in the Central African Republic, particularly:

- The intensification of acts by highwaymen and rebel movements in a number of regions;
- The numerous attacks on humanitarian personnel;
- The increase in the number of residential break-ins in Bangui;
- The repeated rebel attacks on towns in northern Central African Republic and the numerous human rights violations resulting from such attacks as well as from reprisals by the security forces;
- The increased inter-community violence, which often took the form of conflicts between herders and farmers;
- The development of cross-border crime and the proliferation of illegal small arms.

32. The Committee firmly condemned the attacks on humanitarian workers and United Nations staff members present in the Central African Republic.

33. It urged the Government to take measures to bring the perpetrators of those crimes to justice and to ensure the protection of the personnel in question, who were providing the people of the Central African Republic with vital support.

34. The Committee once again rejected any attempt to take power by unconstitutional means.

35. The Committee appealed to the international community to provide the Central African Republic with the support it needed to secure its borders and generally improve security conditions by, inter alia, a restructuring of national defence and security forces and a strengthening of their operational capacities.

36. It welcomed the contribution of the Multinational Force of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (FOMUC) to the efforts to restore peace and security in the Central African Republic.

37. The Committee welcomed the decision by the United Nations to deploy a multidisciplinary operation along the borders of the Central African Republic, Chad and the Sudan and expressed support for that new concept of operations presented by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

38. It likewise commended the decision of the European Union to establish an operation that would support the United Nations presence in eastern Chad and north-eastern Central African Republic.

39. The Committee encouraged the States and organizations of the region as well as other States and institutions to continue to provide support to the Government of the Central African Republic, particularly in the financial sector and in the area of security.

(iv) Democratic Republic of the Congo

40. The Committee welcomed the progress made in the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly:

- The successful establishment of political institutions resulting from the electoral process;
- The publication by the Supreme Court of Justice in May 2007 of the final list of National Deputies;
- The holding in July 2007 of a meeting between the Head of State and leaders of the principal institutions with a view to dissipating tension;
- Diplomatic efforts aimed at strengthening ties with neighbouring countries;
- The visit to Kinshasa, at the invitation of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of a delegation headed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Rwanda from 2 to 4 September 2007, which led to the signing of a joint communiqué on 3 September 2007.

41. The Committee called on Congolese political actors to work to consolidate democratic reforms by emphasizing dialogue in the settlement of disputes.

42. The Committee expressed its deep concern at the deterioration in the military and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly:

- The clashes between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and armed groups and the fighting between rival militias in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces and in Ituri;

- Resistance to the formation of "mixed" troops, inter alia by elements from the Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP), the military-political movement of the dissident General Laurent Nkunda, which continue to create tension in North Kivu province;
- The persistent insecurity generated by hostile foreign forces, particularly the Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda and the Rastas in North and South Kivu provinces, as well as uncontrolled elements in Kinshasa;
- The emergence of the phenomena of "road-blockers" and transhumance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;
- The serious humanitarian consequences of the violent acts perpetrated by armed foreign groups, particularly the Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda, and the military activities of the "mixed" brigades;
- The recruitment of children by the "mixed" brigades and the refusal of the brigades and their commanders to join FARDC.

43. The Committee called upon the armed groups to turn in their weapons and participate unconditionally in the DDRR (disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation) process. It invited the Government to develop, in collaboration with MONUC, a comprehensive plan to ensure security in the eastern part of the country, inter alia by making further progress in the DDRR process, ending impunity and encouraging the holding of the Conference on Peace and Security in North and South Kivu, as recommended by the Government.

44. It encouraged MONUC to continue, in full and effective implementation of its mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, to support those brigades that had been integrated in their mission to uphold the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and also to disarm recalcitrant foreign or Congolese armed groups and encourage the Government to complete the reform of the security sector.

45. It urged neighbouring States to do more to facilitate the effective reintegration of former combatants who returned to their countries and to prevent any recruitment in their territory.

46. At the subregional level, the Committee approved the continuing efforts to improve relations with Rwanda and with certain other neighbouring countries.

47. It welcomed the relaunch of the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries and the signature of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, which improve prospects for the normalization of bilateral relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

(v) Republic of Chad

48. The Committee welcomed the positive developments in the political situation in Chad, including:

- The conclusion of peace agreements between the Government and certain major factions of the political-military opposition in December 2006, as a result of which the former leader of the Front uni pour le changement (FUC) joined the Government as Minister of Defence;

- The continuation of the inter-Chadian dialogue initiated on 8 February 2007 by the presidential majority and its allies with the political opposition, which resulted in the signature on 13 August 2007 of an agreement on the strengthening of the democratic process in Chad;
- The appointment of a figure from the political opposition to head the new Government;
- The commencement of negotiations between the Government and the rest of the political-military opposition, which started in June 2007 and are continuing in Tripoli with mediation by the Guide of the Libyan Revolution, President Muammar Al-Qadhafi;
- The contacts established and pursued thanks to the mediation of the Gabonese Head of State, H. E. El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba, between the Government and the opposition abroad, reflected in the visit to N'Djamena at the end of July 2007 by the exiled former Chadian Head of State, Mr. Goukouni Wedeye, leading a large opposition delegation.

49. The Committee also expressed deep concern about the continuing precarious military and security situation in the eastern region of Chad, including:

- The latent destabilization threats still affecting Chad owing to attacks by rebel groups based in the Sudan and abuses of the civilian population by the Janjaweed militias;
- The proliferation of small arms and the development of cross-border banditry;
- The spread of inter-communal conflicts.

50. The Committee welcomed the decision of the United Nations and the agreement of the European Union to deploy a multidisciplinary force along the borders of the Central African Republic, Chad and the Sudan and supported the new concept of operations presented in this connection by the United Nations Secretary-General.

51. At the regional level, the Committee welcomed the resumption of the process of normalization of relations between Chad and the Sudan, including the creation in May 2007, within the quadripartite framework of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), of a mechanism for enforcement of the security provisions contained in the Tripoli Agreement of 8 February 2006.

V. Inter-State security cooperation among the Central African countries: Report on preparations for the Bahr-El-Gazal joint military exercise (November 2007)

52. The Committee noted with interest the information provided by the delegation of Chad on the status of preparations for the Bahr-El-Gazal joint military exercise and particularly on the Coordination Conference held in N'Djamena in July 2007 and the organization in Malabo in August 2007 of a meeting of the Defence and Security Committee to finalize arrangements for the exercise. It welcomed the assurances given by the Chadian delegation regarding the deadline of November 2007 for holding the exercise.

VI. Promotion of disarmament and arms limitation programmes in Central Africa

(i) Implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative

53. The Committee noted with interest the progress report of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs on the Sao Tome Initiative, including the project for the drafting of a legal instrument on the control of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa and of a code of conduct for defence and security forces.

54. It welcomed the fact that the discussions held on this subject between the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the secretariat of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) resulted in the signature on 18 August 2007 of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two institutions concerning the implementation of the Sao Tome Initiative.

55. It encouraged the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs and the ECCAS secretariat to continue their efforts to execute this project on the basis of the established timetable and stated its willingness to consider the relevant preliminary drafts as soon as they became available.

56. It expressed satisfaction with the proposed methodology, which provides for simultaneous elaboration of a legal instrument and of its action plan, accompanied by *travaux préparatoires*.

57. It appealed to international partners and particularly to donors to provide financial support for this Initiative.

(ii) Implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) in Africa

58. The Committee took note of the briefing by the representative of the Office for Disarmament Affairs on the implementation in Africa of resolution 1540 (2004), adopted by the Security Council on 28 April 2004, which emphasizes efforts to combat the use of and trafficking in nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery by non-State actors.

59. It noted with interest the information on the holding in November 2007 in Botswana of the next workshop to raise awareness of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), to which the African countries which did not participate in the Accra workshop, including certain countries of Central Africa, will be invited.

60. It welcomed the intention of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs to organize another workshop in Africa in 2008 to promote the full implementation of resolution 1540 (2004), including through training for customs and border officials and other administrative bodies.

VII. Report by the ECCAS secretariat on the institutional evolution of the subregional peace and security structures and mechanisms

61. The Committee took note of the briefing by the ECCAS secretariat on the main activities which it has recently conducted in the areas of peace, security, human integration, support for democratization processes and development of partnerships with various institutions.

62. It welcomed the progress made in implementing the early warning mechanism for Central Africa (MARAC) and in particular:

- The second training seminar held on 21 May 2007 for MARAC officials and regional staff officers, with an expert from Swisspeace's early warning system, FAST International;
- The study visit from 9 to 13 July 2007 to the European early warning institutions in Brussels and from 16 to 17 July 2007 to the Observation and Monitoring Centre of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in order to develop lessons learned from a comparable system;
- The human and technological capacity-building carried out.

63. It also welcomed the expanding activity of the Directorate of Political and Diplomatic Actions and of the Central Africa Multinational Force (FOMAC),

64. The Committee also welcomed the ongoing development of ECCAS bodies and instruments for conflict prevention and crisis management and noted with interest the information on the forthcoming presentation of a "Road map for the development of a Central African conflict prevention system".

VIII. Consideration of the draft General Assembly resolution on the activities of the Advisory Committee

65. The Committee considered and adopted the draft resolution on its activities that will be submitted in the First Committee during the sixty-second regular session of the United Nations General Assembly.

IX. Report on the activities of the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa

66. The Committee took note with interest of the report submitted by the Director of the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy on its activities.

X. Conference on cross-border security issues in Central Africa

67. The Committee heard the report submitted by the Conference secretariat on the work of the Conference and the results achieved. It urged member countries to ensure the effective implementation of the recommendations adopted at the conclusion of the Conference and appealed to international partners and donors to give them the necessary support in that connection.

XI. Date and place of the next meeting

68. The Committee decided to hold its twenty-seventh ministerial meeting in Luanda, Republic of Angola, in February 2008. The exact dates will be announced later.

XII. Other matters

69. The Committee decided to adopt the opening statement delivered by H. E. Mr. Jean Marie Atangana Mebara, Minister of State, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon, as a working paper of the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting and to consider the main proposals contained therein at its twenty-seventh meeting.

XIII. Adoption of the report of the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting

70. The Committee adopted this report on 7 September 2007.

71. Lastly, the participants commended the good atmosphere that had prevailed throughout the meeting. The following expression of thanks was read out:

"We, the representatives of the States members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Central African Security Questions, assembled for the twenty-sixth ministerial meeting held from 3 to 7 September 2007 in Yaoundé, Republic of Cameroon,

Reaffirm our commitment to the ideals of peace, security and stability deeply cherished by our respective peoples and to the socio-economic development of our subregion,

Commend the individual and collective efforts of our countries to achieve peace, security, stability and development,

Welcome the atmosphere of conviviality, brotherhood and mutual trust which has prevailed throughout our work, and

Express our sincere thanks and deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, and to the Government and people of Cameroon for the warm welcome and fraternal hospitality we have received during our stay in Cameroon."

Done in Yaoundé on 7 September 2007